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SCP # 4295

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Soc. of Inquiry
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A

Second Defence
OF THE
MONOTHEISTICAL SYSTEM
OF
THE VEDS,
IN REPLY TO
An Apology for the Present State
OF
HINDOO WORSHIP.

BY RAMMOHUN ROY.

PRINTED AT CALCUTTA.

1817.

The learned Brahmun in his defence of idolatry thus begins: “ Let it not be supposed that, the following treatise has been written with a view to refute, the doctrines of those assuming inventors and self-interested moderns” &c. “ It is solely with the intention of expressing the true meaning of these authorities that this brief treatise has been composed” : and he thus concludes: “ The vedant chundrica, or lunar light of the vedant, has thus been made apparent, and thus the glow-worm’s light has been eclipsed ” It is very much to be feared that, from the perusal of this treatise, called the lunar light of the vedant, but filled up with* satirical fables,† abusive expressions, and

* P. 1st. L. 26th; P. 2nd L. 17th, P. 19 and 20th, margin.

† P. 1st, P. 3rd L. 9th, P. 8th L. 17th, P. 38th L. 14th, P. 48th L. 19th. &c. &c.

contradictory assertions, sometimes admitting monotheism, but at the same time blending with it and defending polytheism, & those foreign gentleman, as well as those natives of this country who are not acquainted with the real tenets of the Vedant, might on a superficial view, form a very unsavourable opinion of that theology, which however treats with perfect consistency of the unity and universality of the Supreme Being, and forbids positively, treating with contempt or behaving ill towards any creature whatsoever.

As to the satire* and abuse, neither my education permits any return by means of similar language, nor does the system of my religion admit even a desire of unbecoming retaliation: situated as I am, I must bear *them tranquilly*.

Besides; a sect of people, who are apt to make use of the most foul language, when

* P. 13th L. 14th,

† Vide the "Apology," *passim*.

they feel angry with their supposed deities,* cannot of course be expected, when irritated with contradiction, to pay due attention, unless checked by fear, to the propriety of the use of decent expressions, either in common conversation, or in religious controversy.

The total sum of the arguments, set forth as far as page 13 of the translation of this treatise, (however inconsistent they are with each other,) seems intended to prove that, faith in the Supreme Being, when united with moral works, leads men to eternal happiness.

This doctrine, I am happy to observe,

* As may be observed when at the annual festival of Juggunnath, the car, in which he is conveyed, happens to be impeded in its progress by any unseen obstacle. In this case, the difficulty is supposed to be occasioned by the malicious opposition of that god, on whom the most gross abuse is liberally bestowed by his devotees.

strongly corroborates every assertion, that I have made in my translation; a few paragraphs of which I beg leave to repeat here, for the satisfaction of my readers.—In the abridgment of the Vedant, page 11th: “ The “ Vedant shews that, moral principle is a “ part of the adoration of God, viz. a “ command over passions and over the ex-“ ternal senses of the body, and good acts, “ are declared by the ved to be indispensi-“ ble in the mind’s approximation to God; “ they should therefore be strictly taken care “ of, and attended to, both previously and “ subsequently to such approximation to the “ Supreme Being; that is to say, we should “ not indulge our evil propensities, but should “ endeavour to have entire control over them: “ reliance on and self-resignation to the on-“ ly true Being, with an aversion to worldly “ considerations, are included in the good acts “ above alluded to.” In the introduction to the Ishopanished (page 5.) “ Under these “ impressions, therefore, I have been impelled

“ to lay before them genuine translations of
“ parts of their scriptures, which inculcate
“ not only the enlightened worship of One God,
“ but the purest principles of morality.” But
the learned Brainin asserts, in two instances,
among arguments above noticed, that, the wor-
ship of a favoured deity and that of an image,
are also considered to be acts of morality.
The absurdity of this assertion will be shown
afterwards, in considering the subjects of idol-
worship. To English readers however it may be
proper to remark that, the Sung scrit word which
signifies *works*, is not to be understood in the
same sense, as that which it implies in Christian
theology, when works are opposed to faith.
Christians understand by works, actions of
moral merit; whereas Hindoos use the term
in their theology, only to denote religious rites
and ceremonies prescribed by Hindoo law-
givers, which are often irreconcilable with the
commonly received maxims of moral duty; As
for instance the crime of suicide prescribed to

widows, by Ungeera, and to pilgrims at holy places, by the Nursingh and Koorma Porans. I do not, therefore, admit that works, taken in the latter sense, (that is the different religious acts prescribed by the Sastra to the different classes of Hindoos respectively) are necessary to attain divine faith, or that they are indispensable accompaniments of holy knowledge ; for the Vedant in the chapter 3rd, section 4, text 37th, positively declares that the true knowledge of God may be acquired without observing the rules and rites prescribed by the Sastra to each class of Hindoos ; and also, examples are frequently found in the Ved, of persons, who, though they neglected the performance of religious rites and ceremonies, attained divine knowledge and absorption, by control over their passions and senses, and by contemplation of the Ruler of the universe. Menu the first and chief of all hindoo law-givers, confirms the same doctrines in describing the duties of laymen in the texts 22nd, 23rd and 24th of the 4th

chapter of his work: and in the Bhashya, or commentaries on the Ishopanishead and on the other upanishads of the Vedas, the illustrious Sankaracharjya declared the attainment of faith in God, and the adoration of the Supreme Being, to be entirely independent of brahminical ceremonies; and the Ved affirms that,

“ Many learned true believers never worshiped fire nor any celestial god through fire.”

The learned Brahmun, although he has acknowledged himself in p. 9th. line 6th. of his treatise, that, “ In the opinion of Sankaracharjya the attainment of absorption does not depend on works of merit,” (or properly speaking on religious rites,) yet forgetting the obedience he has expressed to be due to the instruction * of that celebrated commentator, has immediately contradicted his opinion, when he says in p.

9. I. 9.—“ It has also been ascertained
 “ that acts of merit,” (brahminical rites)
 “ must be performed previously to the at-
 “ tainment of divine knowledge;” for, if di-
 “ vine knowledge were to be dependent on
 the observance of brahminical rites, and absorp-
 tion dependent on divine knowledge, it would
 follow necessarily, that absorption would depend
 on brahminical rites, which is directly con-
 trary to the opinion of the commentator
 quoted by the learned Brabmun himself.

Moreover the learned Brabmun at first
 states (p. 11th. l. 12th.) that, “ In the
 “ ancient writers we read that a know-
 “ ledge of Brahm, or holy knowledge, is
 “ independent of acts” (religious rites;) but
 he again contradicts this statement, and en-
 deavours to explain it away, p. 11th. l.
 24th. “ Thus when the Sastras state that
 “ absorption may be attained even though
 “ the sacrificial fires be neglected, the praise
 “ of that holy knowledge is intended, but

not the depreciation of meritorious acts, (brahminical rites.) Here he chuses to accuse his scripture and ancient holy writers, of exaggerated and extravagant praise of holy knowledge, rather than that the least shock should be given by their authority to the structure of paganism and idolatry. From this instance the public may perceive, how zealous the learned Brahmun, and his brethren are, in respect to the preservation of their fertile estate of idolatry, when they are willing to sacrifice to it, even their own scriptural authorities.

Upon a full perusal of the treatise, it appears, that the arguments employed by the learned Brahmun have no other object, than to support the weak system of idol-worship ; in as much as he repeatedly declares, that the adoration of 330,000000 deities, especially the principal ones, such as, Siva, Vishnu, Kali, Gunesh, the sun and others, through their several images, has been enjoined by the Shastras, and sanctioned

by custom. I am not a little surprized to observe, that after having perused my Preface to the Ishopanishad in Bengali, (of which during the last twelve months I have distributed nearly five hundred copies amongst all descriptions of Hindoos) the learned Brahmun has offered no objection to what I have therein asserted, relative to the reason assigned by the same Shastras, as well for the injunction to worship these figured beings, as for the general prevalence of idol worship in this country.

In that work I admitted, that the worship of these deities was directed by the Shastras: but, at the same time, I proved by their own authority, that this was merely a concession made to the limited faculties of the vulgar, with the view of remedying in some degree, the misfortune of their being incapable of comprehending and adopting the spiritual worship of the true God. Thus, in the aforesaid preface, I remarked; "for they (the Poorans, Tuntras, &c.) repeatedly declare God to be one, and above

“ the apprehension of the external and internal
“ senses. They indeed expressly declare the di-
“ vinity of many gods, and the mode of their
“ worship; but they reconcile those contradicting
“ assertions by affirming frequently that, the di-
“ rections to worship any celestial beings, are
“ only applicable to those who are incapable of
“ elevating their minds to the idea of an invisible
“ being.” And, with the view to remove every doubt
as to the correctness of my assertion, I at
the same time quoted the most unquestionable
authorities; a few of which I shall here re-
peat. “ Thus corresponding to the natures of
“ different powers and qualities, numerous figures
“ have been invented for the benefit of those who
“ are not possessed of sufficient understanding.”
“ The vulgar look for their gods in water; men
“ of more extended knowledge, in celestial bo-
“ dies; the ignorant, in wood, bricks, and stones,
“ but learned men in the universal soul.” “ It
“ is impossible for those who consider pilgri-
“ age as devotion, and believe that the divine

" nature exists in the image, to look up to,
 " communicate with, to petition, and to serve
 " true believers in God."

Such indeed is the prevalent nature of truth, that when to dispute it, is impossible, the learned Brahmun has not been always successful in concealing it, even when the admission is most fatal to his own argument—In P. 28—L. 34—he says, " But to those it is enjoined " who from a *defective understanding*, do not " perceive that God exists in every thing, that " they should worship him through the medi- " um of some created object." In making this acknowledgement the learned Brahmun has confirmed the correctness of all my assertions; though the evident conclusion is that he and all his followers must either immediately give up all pretensions to understanding or forsake idolatry...

In my former tract, I not only proved that the adoration of the supreme Being in spirit was prescribed by the Ved to men of under-

standing, and the worship of the celestial bodies, and their images to the ignorant, but I also asserted that, the Ved actually prohibited the worship of any kind of figured beings, by men of intellect and education. A few of the passages quoted by me in my former publications on which this assertion rests, I also beg leave to repeat.

“ He who worships any god except the supreme Being, and thinks that he himself is distinct and inferior to that God, knows nothing, and is considered a domestic beast of these gods.” “ A state even so high as that of Brahmâ, does not afford real bliss.” “ Adore God alone. None but the supreme Being is to be worshipped, nothing excepting him should be adored by a wise man.” I repeat also the following text of the Vedant, “ The declaration of the Ved that, those that worship the celestial gods are the food of such gods, is an allegorical expression, and only means that they are comforts to the

“celestial gods, as food to mankind; for he
 “who has no faith in the supreme Being, is
 “rendered subject to these gods; The Ved
 “affirms the same.” No reply therefore is, I pre-
 sume required of me to the arguments adduced by the
 learned Brahman in his treatise for idol worship;
 except that I should offer some additional authorities,
 confirming exclusively the rational worship of
 the true God, and prohibiting the worship of
 the celestial figures and their images. I beg
 leave accordingly to quote, in the first instance,
 a few texts of the Ved.* “Men may ac-
 “quire eternal beatitude, by obtaining a
 “knowledge of the supreme Being alone;
 “there is no other way to salvation.”†
 “To those that acquire a knowledge of
 “him, the ruler of the intellectual power,

* Sooetu.

† Catha.

" who is eternal amidst the perishable universe.
 " and is the source of sensation among all
 " animate existences, and who alone assigns
 " to so many objects their respective purposes,
 " everlasting beatitude is allotted; but not
 " to those who are not possessed of that
 " knowledge." And in the 4,5, 6,7, and 8th
 texts of the Cenopanishud, the Ved has, five
 times successively, denied the divinity of any
 specific being, which men in general worship;
 and has affirmed the divinity of that Being
 solely, who is beyond description and compre-
 hension, and out of the reach of the power
 of vision and of the sense of hearing, or of
 smelling. The most celebrated Sankaracharjya,
 in his commentary upon these texts states
 that, lest people should suppose Vish-
 nu, Mahadeva, Poven, Indra or any other
 to be a supreme spirit, the Ved in this
 passage disavows positively the divinity of
 all of them.—Again the Ved says.* " Those

* Ishopanishad.

" that neglect the contemplation of the
 " supreme spirit, either by devoting them-
 " selves solely to the performance of the
 " ceremonies of religion, or by living desti-
 " tute of religious ideas, shall, after death,
 " assume the state of demons, such as that of
 " the celestial gods, and of other created
 " beings, which are surrounded with the dark-
 " ness of ignorance." It will not, I hope, be
 supposed inconsistent with the subject in ques-
 tion, to mention in this place, in what manner
 the Vedant treats of these celestial gods, and
 how the Ved classes them among the other
 beings. The Vedant C. 1st, S. 3d T. 26th,
 has the following passage. " Vyas affirms
 " that it is prescribed also to celestial gods
 " and heavenly beings to attain a knowledge of
 " the supreme being, because a desire of ab-
 " sorption is *equally* possible for them." And
 the Ved in the Moonduc Upanishad thus
 declares, " From him, who knows all things
 " generally and particularly, and who only by

" his omniscience, *created the universe, Bruh-*
 " *má, and whatever bears appellation, and*
 " *figure as well as food, all are produced.*."
 " From him (the Supreme Being) celestial
 " *gods** of many descriptions, Siddha or beings
 " next to celestial gods, mankind, beasts,
 " birds, life, wheat, and barley, all are produc-
 " ed." In the Debee Mahatmya a work,
 which is as much in circulation among the
 Hindoos as their daily prayer book,† (C. 1st,
 T. 66th) the creation of Vishnu, Brahma, and
 Mahadeva is most distinctly affirmed.

* The Ved having in the first instance personified all the attributes and powers of the deity, and also the celestial bodies and natural elements, does, in conformity to this idea of personification, treat of them in the subsequent passages as if they were real beings, ascribing to them birth, animation, senses, and accidents, as well as liability to annihilation.

† Pooja Patal.

Munnoo the best of all the commentators of the Veds, says, chap: 12th, text 85th ;

“ Of all those duties, answered Bhrigoo,
 “ the principal is to acquire *from the Upanishad*, a true knowledge of the one
 “ Supreme Spirit, that is the most exalted
 “ of all sciences, because through that
 “ knowledge eternal beatitude is obtained.”

And the same author in the conclusion of his work on rites and ceremonies, thus directs T, 92nd, C. 12th. “ Thus must the chief of

“ the twice born, though he neglect the
 “ ceremonial rites mentioned in the Shastras, be diligent in attaining a knowledge
 “ of God, in controlling his organs of sense,
 “ and in repeating the Ved.” In the Coolarnuva, “ absorption is not to be effected by the studies of the Veds nor
 “ by the reading of other Shastras: absorption is effected by a true knowledge
 “ of the Supreme Being. O ! Parbutee
 “ except that knowledge there is no other

" way to absorption."—" Cast or religious
 " order belonging to each sect, is not
 " calculated to be the cause of eternal
 " beatitude, nor is the study of Dürshuns
 " or any other Shastras sufficient to pro-
 " duce absorption; a knowledge of the
 " Supreme Spirit is alone the cause of
 " eternal beatitude."—Mahanervana. " He who
 " believes that, from the highest state of
 " Brahmá to the lowest state of a straw,
 " all are delusions, and that the one Su-
 " preme Spirit is the only true being,
 " attains beatitude." " Those who believe that the
 " divine nature exists in an image made of
 " earth, stone, metal, wood, or of other materi-
 " als, reap only distress by their austen-
 " rities; but they cannot without a know-
 " ledge of the Supreme Spirit, acquire
 " absorption."

I am really sorry to observe that, notwithstanding these authorities and a thousand others of a similar nature, the learned Brahmun appears al-

together unimpressed by the luminous manner, in which they inculcate the sublime simple spiritual belief in, and worship of one God, and that on the contrary, he should manifest so much zeal in leading people into an idolatrous belief in the divinity of created and perishable beings.

Idolatry as now practised by our countrymen, and which the learned Brahman so zealously supports as conducive to morality, is not only rejected by the Shastras universally, but must also be looked upon with great horror by common-sense, as leading directly to immorality and destructive of social comforts. For every Hindoo, who devotes himself to this absurd worship, constructs for that purpose a couple of male and female idols, sometimes indecent in form, as representatives of his favourite deities: He is taught and enjoined from his infancy to contemplate and repeat the history of these, as well as of

their fellow deities ; though the actions ascribed to them be only a continued series of debauchery, sensuality, falsehood, ingratitude, breach of trust and treachery to friends.* There can be but one opinion respecting the moral conduct to be expected of a person, who has been brought up with sentiments of reverence to such beings,—who refreshes his memory relative to them almost every day, and who has been persuaded to believe that, a repetition of the HOLY NAME of one of these deities,* or a trifling present to his image or to his devotee, is sufficient not only to purify and free him from all crimes whatsoever, but to procure to him future beatitude.

As to the custom or practice, to which the learned Brahmin so often refers in defence of idolatry, I have already, I presume, explained in the preface of the Ishopanishad, the acci-

* Vid. Note at the end.

dental circumstances which have caused idol-worship to flourish, throughout the greater part of India; but as the learned Brahman has not condescended to notice any of my remarks on this subject, I beg leave to repeat here, a part of them. "Many learned Brahmins are perfectly aware of the absurdity of idolatry, and are well informed of the nature of the pure mode of divine worship, but as in the rites, ceremonies and festivals of idolatry they find the source of their comforts and fortune, they not only never fail to protect idol-worship from all attacks, but even advance and encourage it to the utmost of their power, by keeping the knowledge of their scriptures concealed from the rest of the people." And again; "It is however evident to every one possessed of common sense, that custom or fashion is quite different from divine faith; the latter proceeding from spiritual authorities and correct reasoning; and the former being merely the fruit of vulgar caprice. What can justify a man, who

believes in the inspiration of his religious books, in neglecting the direct authorities of the same works, and subjecting himself entirely to custom and fashion, which are liable to perpetual changes, and depend upon popular whim. But it cannot be passed unnoticed, that those, who practise idolatry, and defend it under the shield of custom, have been violating their customs almost every twenty years, for the sake of a little convenience, or to promote their worldly advantages". Instances of this sort are mentioned at p. 13 and 14 of the preface to the Bengalee translation, (P. 21 English translation of the Ishopanishad) and to those I beg leave to recal the attention of the learned Brahmin.

Every reader may observe that, the learned Brahmin in his treatise, written, (as he says) on the doctrines of the Vedant, has generally neglected to quote any authority for his assertions; and when he cites the Ved or the Vedant (which he does sometimes) as his authority, he carefully omits to mention the text

or part to which his assertion refers: The validity of theological controversy, chiefly depends upon scriptural authority, but when no authority is offered, the public may judge how far its credibility should extend: I shall, however, make a few remarks on the absurd and contradictory assertions with which the treatise abounds.

The learned Brahmin observes;* "But if the divine essence itself and not the energy be extolled, it will be adored under the forms of Brahma, Vishnu, and Indra and other male deities." And in other places P. 30 L. 27. "So by paying adoration to any material object animate or inanimate, the Supreme Being himself is adored." If the truth of the latter assertion be admitted, (namely that God himself is adored by the adoration of any thing whatsoever,) no mark of distinction be-

tween the adoration of any visible objects and male deities will exist; and the former assertion respecting the adoration of the Supreme Being through the male deities only, will appear an absurd restriction.

The learned Brahmun states P. 19 L. 31 that, " If you believe on the authority of the scriptures, that, there is a Supreme Being, can you not believe that he is united to matter?" A belief in God is by no means connected with a belief of his being united to matter: for those that have faith in the existence of the Almighty, and are endued with common sense, scruple not to confess their ignorance as to his nature or mode of existence in regard to the point of his relation to matter, or to the properties of matter. How therefore can a belief in God's being united to matter, be inferred as a necessary consequence of a belief in his existence? The learned Brahmun again contradicts himself on

this point, saying, (P. 38 L. 19.) "The divine essence being supernatural and immaterial, a knowledge of it, is to be acquired solely from revelations."

The learned Brāhmaṇ in P. 18 L. 4, states that, "A quality cannot exist independently of its substance, but substance may exist independently of any quality." Every one possessed of sensation is convinced, that a substance is as much dependent on the possession of some quality or qualities, for its existence, as a quality on some substance. It is impossible even to imagine a substance divested of qualities. Despoil it as much as you please, that of magnitude must still remain. I therefore trust that the public will not suppose the above stated doctrines of the learned Brāhmaṇ to have been derived from those of the Vedant.

It is again stated, P. 21 L. 4 that, "In point of fact, if you admit the existence of matter, as far as it regards yourself,

" with its twenty four accidents, as confirmed by universal experience, you can easily conceive that the same properties belong to the Supreme Being." It is easy enough for the learned Brahmin to conceive, that the twenty four properties, which are peculiar to animals, and among which all sources of carnal pleasures are included, belong to his supposed deities; but it is difficult, or rather impossible, for a man untainted with idolatrous principles, to ascribe to God all such properties as he allows to exist in himself.

The learned Brahmin has drawn an analogy between the operation of the charms of the Veds, and that of magic; whereon he says. P. 18 L. 1st. " Cannot the charms of the Veds operate as powerfully as those of magic in producing effects where the cause is not present?" If the foundation of the Veds, is held not to be stronger, as the learned Brahmin seems to consider it, than that of magic, I am afraid it will be found to rest on so slender a

footing, that its doctrines will hardly be worth discussion.

In P. 24th L. 10th the learned Brahmun states that, " The Vedant itself, in treating of the several deities, declares them to be possessed of forms, and their actions and enjoyments are all dependent on their corporeal nature." But (P. 21st L. 19th) he says; " Because the male and female deities, whose being I contend for, are nothing more than accidents existing in the Supreme Being."

He thus at one time considers these deities as possessed of a corporeal nature, and at another declares them to be mere accidents in God; which are quite inconsistent with the attribute of corporeality. I am really at a loss to understand how the learned Brahmun could admit so dark a contradiction into his "*Lunar light of the Vedant.*"

The learned Brahmun in P. 27th L. 6th thus assimilates the worship of the Supreme Being to that

of an earthly king; saying, "Let us drop the dis-
" course concerning a Supreme and Invisible
" Being; take an earthly king. It is evident
" that to serve him, there must be the me-
" dium of materiality. Can service to him
" be accomplished otherwise, than by atten-
" dance on his person, praising his qualities
" or some similar method?" Those who
believe God to be an almighty, omnisci-
ent, and independent existence, which, per-
vading the universe, is deficient in no-
thing; and also know the feeble and depen-
dent nature of earthly kings, as liable to sud-
den ruin, as harassed by incessant cares and
wants, ought never; I presume, to assimili-
late the contemplation of the Almighty power
with any corporeal service acceptable to an
earthly king. But as by means of this ana-
logy, the learned Brahmin and his brethren,
have successfully persuaded their followers to
make, in imitation of presents and bribes of-
fered to princes, pecuniary vows to these sup-

posed deities, to which it would seem none but the learned Brahmin and his brethren have^{an} exclusive claim,—and as such analogy has thus become the source of their comforts and livelihood, I shall say no more upon so tender a subject.

He further observes in (P. 22nd L 27th)

“ In reverting to the subject, you affirm, that you admit the existence of matter in human beings, because it is evident to your senses; but deny it with respect to God, because it is not evident to your senses” &c. and, “ If this be your method of reasoning, it would appear that your faith is confined to those objects only, which are evident to your senses.” As far as my recollection goes with respect to the contents of my publications, both in the native language and in english, I believe, I never denied the materiality of God on the mere ground of its not being evident to our senses. The assertion which I quoted or

made use of in my former treatises is, that the nature of the godhead is beyond the comprehension* of external and internal senses; which I presume implies neither denial of the materiality of God, on the sole ground of his being invisible, nor the limitation of my faith, merely to objects evident to the senses. For many things that far surpass the limits of our senses to perceive, or experience to teach, may yet be rendered credible or even demonstrated by inferences drawn from our experience. Such as the mutual gravitation of the earth and moon towards each other, and of both to the sun, which facts cannot be perceived by any of our senses, but may be clearly demonstrated by reasoning drawn from our experience. Hence it appears that a thing is justly denied

* The preface to the Ishopanishad. P. 2 L. 9 P. 3 L. 2. The abridgement of the Vedant P. 1st and 2nd.

only when found contrary to sense and reason, and not merely because it is not perceptible to the senses.

I have now to notice the friendly advice given me by the learned Brahmun in (P. 23 L. 16) " But at all the events divest yourself of the " uneasy sensations you profess to experience, " at witnessing the worship paid to idols, pre- " pared at the expence and labour of ano- " ther." In thanking him for his trouble in offering me this counsel, I must however beg the learned Brahmun to excuse me, while I acknowledge myself unable to follow it; and that for several reasons. 1st A feeling for the misery and distress of his fellow creatures is, to every one not overpowered by selfish motives, I presume, rather natural than optional. 2ndly I, as one of their countrymen, and ranked in the most religious sect, of course participate in the disgrace and ridicule to which they have subjected themselves, in defiance of their scriptural authority, by the wor-

ship of idols, very often under the most shameful forms, accompanied with the foulest language, and most indecent hymns and gestures. 3rdly A sense of the duty, which one man owes to another, compels me to exert my utmost endeavours to rescue them from imposition and servitude, and promote their comfort and happiness.

He farther observes; (P. 30 L. 19) " In the like manner, the king of kings is served equally by those worshippers who are acquainted with his real essence, and by those who only recognize him under the forms of the deities: but in the future distribution of rewards, a distinction will be made." As the learned Brahmun confesses, that the same reward is not promised to the worshippers of figured deities as to the adorers of the Supreme Being, it seems strange, that he should persist in alleging that God is truly worshipped in the adora-

tion of figured gods; for if the worship be in both cases the same, the reward bestowed by a just God must be the same to both; but the rewards are not the same to both, and therefore the worship of figured deities cannot be considered equal to the adoration of God.

In the same page, L. 7th, he compares God to a mighty emperor; saying.—“ As a mighty emperor travels through his kingdom in the garb of a peasant, to effect the welfare of his subjects, so the king of kings pervades the universe, assuming a divine or even an human form, for the same benevolent purpose.” This comparison seems extremely objectionable, and the inference from it totally inadmissible. For a king being ignorant of things out of the reach of his sight, and liable to be deceived respecting the secrets and private opinions of his subjects, may sometimes be obliged to travel through his kingdom, to acquire a knowledge of their condition, and to promote their welfare person-

gily. But there can be obviously no inducement for an omnipotent being, in whose omniscience also the learned Bramun, I dare say, believes, to assume a form in order either to acquaint himself with the affairs of men, or to accomplish any benevolent design towards his creatures.

He again observes that, these figures and idols are representations of the true God, a sight of which serves, as he alleges, to bring that Being to his recollection, (P. 30. L. 5.)

"They are as pictures which recal to the memory a dear and absent friend, or like the worship of the Moon, reflected in various waters."

This observation of the learned Bramun, induces me to suppose, that he must have formed a notion of Godhead quite strange and contemptible. For it is almost impossible for a man, who has a becoming idea of God's superiority to all creatures, to represent him, as the Hindoos very often do, in a form so shameful, that a description of it is prohibited by common decency, or in a shape so ridiculous, as that pie-

bald kite called Kshyemunkuree, and that of another bird called Neelkunth, or of Jackals &c. And it is equally difficult to believe that a rational being, can make use of such objects to bring the all perfect, almighty power to his recollection.

He further says, P. 31 L. 32 " If any one assert that the case is otherwise, that the deities, mankind, the heavens and other objects have an existence independent of God, that faith in him is sufficient without worship, that they (the deities) cannot meet with reverence, how can that person affect to disbelieve the doctrine of independent existence, or assert that he is a believer in universality or a follower of the Vedant?" To acquit myself from such gross but unfounded accusation as that of my believing material existence, to be independent of God, I repeat a few passages from the abridgement of the Vedant, (P. 6th L. 8th) " Nothing bears true existence excepting God." Again in L. 9th

" The existence of whatever thing that appears to us, relies on the existence of God." Besides there is not, I am confident, a single assertion in the whole of my publications, from which the learned Bráhmun might justly infer, that I believed in the independent existence of deities, mankind, the heavens or other objects. The public, by an examination of these works, will be enabled to judge, how far the learned Bráhmun has ventured to brave public opinion, in the invention of arguments for the defence of idolatry.

He again says, P. 34 L. 28: " If by the practice of the prescribed forms in a church, a temple, or a mosque, God be worshipped, how can he be dishonoured by being worshipped under the form of an image however manufactured?" Those who contemplate God in a church or mosque, or elevate their minds to a notion of the Almighty power in any other appropriated place, for the sake of good example, never pay divine homage to

these places; but those that pretend to worship God under the form of an image, consider it to be possessed of divine nature, and at the same time most inconsistently, as imbued with immoral principles. Moreover the promoters of the worship of images, by promulgating anecdotes illustrative of the supposed divine power of particular idols, endeavour to excite the reverence of the people, and specially of pilgrims; who under these superstitious ideas, are persuaded to propitiate them with large sacrifices of money, and some times even by that of their own lives. Having so far entered into this subject, the learned Brahman will, I hope, be convinced of the impropriety of the analogy which he has drawn between a worship *within* a certain material object and a worship *of* a material object.

As to his question (P. 34 L. 32) "Is the sight of the image unpleasing?" My answer must be affirmative. It is extremely natural that, to a mind whose purity is

not corrupted by a degrading superstition, the sight of images which are often of the most hideous or indecent description, and which must therefore excite disgust in the minds of the spectator, should be unpleasing. A visit to Calighaut,* or Barahnagur,† which are only distant four miles from Calcutta, will sufficiently convince the reader of the unpleasant nature of their beloved images. He again asks in the same P. L. 33 " Will a beloved friend be treated with disrespect by being seated on a chair, when he arrives in your house, or by being presented with fragrant flowers, and other offerings?" To which I shall say no; but at the same time I must assert that, a friend worthy of reverence would not, we may be sure, be at all pleased at

* The temple of Kali.

† Where there are 12 temples dedicated to Siva.

being exhibited sometimes in a form,* the bare mention of which would be considered as a gross insult to the decorous feelings of the public, and sometimes in the shape of a monkey† fish,‡ Hog,§ or elephant,¶ or at being represented as destitute of every virtue, and altogether abandoned. Nor would he believe his host to be possessed of common sense, who as a token of regard, would altogether neglect his guest, to go and lay fruits and flowers before his picture.

It is said (P. 39th L, 23) " In the accounts of ancient Greece we meet with the worship of idols, and the practice of austerities, but these acts have been contemned by the more enlightened moderns" I am really glad to observe,

* Under which Siva is adored.

† Hunooman.

‡ The first incarnation of Vishnu.

§ The third incarnation of Ditto.

¶ Guneshi.

that the learned Brahman more liberally and plainly than could be expected, confesses that idolatry will be totally contemned as soon as the understanding is improved. I, however, beg leave to remark on this instance that, though the idolatry practised by the Greeks and Romans was certainly just as impure, absurd and puerile as that of the present Hindoos, yet the former was by no means so destructive of the comforts of life, or injurious to the texture of society as the latter. The present Hindoo idolatry, being made to consist in following certain modes and restraints of diet, (which according to the authorities of the Mahabharat and other histories were never observed by their fore-fathers) has subjected its unfortunate votaries to entire separation from the rest of the world and also from each other, and to constant inconveniences and distress.

A Hindoo, for instance, who affects particu-

lar purity* cannot even partake of food dressed by his own brother, when invited to his house ; and if touched by him while eating, he must throw away the remaining part of his meal. In fact owing to the observance of such peculiar idolatry, directly contrary to the authorities of their scripture, they hardly deserve the name of social beings.

The learned Brahman farther says, P. 23 L: 3rd " If you affirm that you are not an infidel, but that your arguments are in conformity with those of the philosophers who were ignorant of the veds" &c. A remark of this kind cannot, I am sure, be considered as at all applicable to a person who has subjected himself to this writer's remarks, only by translating and publishing the principal parts of the Ved and by vindicating the vedant

* A person of this description is distinguished by the name of Swayung pak ; one who is his own cook.

theology; and who never advanced on religious controversy, any argument which was not founded upon the authorities of the Veds and their celebrated commentators. It is however remarkable that, although the learned Brahmun and his brethren frequently quote the name of the Veds, and other Shastras, both in writing and in verbal discussion; they pay little or no attention in practise to their precepts, even in the points of the most important nature; a few of which I beg leave to notice here. 1st. The adoration of the invisible supreme Being, although exclusively prescribed by the Upanishads or the principal parts of the Veds, and also by the Vedant, has been totally neglected and even discountenanced by the learned Brahmun and his followers; the idol worship, which those authorities permit only to the ignorant, having been substituted for that pure worship. 2ndly Ungeera, and Vishnu, and also the modern Rughouundun, authorize a widow to burn herself voluntarily along with the corpse of her

husband; but modern Brahmuns, in direct opposition to their authority, allow her relations to bind the mournful and infatuated widow to the funeral pile, with ropes and bamboos, as soon as she has expressed a wish to perform the dreadful funeral sacrifice, to which the Brahmuns lend a ready assistance. 3rdly: Altho' an acceptance of money or of a present in the marriage contract of a daughter is most strictly prohibited by the Veds and by Munoo, (text 98 and 100 of chap:9) yet the sale of female children under pretence of marriage is practised by nearly two thirds of the Brahmuns of Bengal and Tirhoot, as well as by their followers generally.

4thly Yagnyubulkya has authorized the second marriage of a man, while his former wife is living, but only under certain circumstances of misconduct or misfortune in the latter; such as the vice of drinking wine, of deception, of extravagance, of using disagreeable language or shewing manifest dislike to-

wards her husband; long protracted and incurable illness, barrenness, or producing only female offspring. In defiance however of this restraint, some of them marry thirty or forty women, either for the sake of money got with them at marriage or to gratify brutal inclinations. Madhosingh the late Rajah of Tirhoot, through compassion towards that helpless sex, limited, I am told, within these 30 or 40 years, the Brahmuns of that district to four wives only. This regulation although falling short both of the written law and of that of reason, tends to alleviate in some measure, the misery to which women were before exposed, as well as to diminish in some degree domestic strife and disturbance.

5thly—According to the authority of Munoo (text 155 chap: 2nd) respect and distinction are due to a Brahmun, merely in proportion to his knowledge; but on the contrary amongst modern Hindoos, honor is paid exclusively to certain families of Brahmuns, such as the Koolins, &c, however void of knowledge and

principle they may be. This departure from law and justice, was made by the authority of a native prince of Bengal, named Bullalsen: within the last 3 or 4 hundred years. And this innovation may perhaps be considered as the chief source of that decay of learning and virtue, which, I am sorry to say, may be at present observed. For wherever respectability is confined to birth only, acquisition of knowledge and the practise of morality, in that country, must rapidly decline.

The learned Brahmun objects to the term *indescribable*, although universally assigned to the Supreme Being by the Ved and by the Vedant theology, saying (P. 37. L. 20.) " It is a wonderful interpretation of the Vedant to say, that God is indescribable, although existing, unless indeed he be looked upon as the production of magic, as existing in one sense, and non-existent in another," and again (L. 14.) " He, therefore, who asserts that the Supreme Being is indescribable and

" at the same time existing, must conceive
 " that he like the world is mutable &c." In
 answer to which I beg to refer the learned
 Brahmun to the 11th text of the 3rd Brahmun
 of the 4th chapter of the Brehdarunyuc, the
 principal part of the Ujoor Ved, as comment-
 ed upon by the celebrated Sunkaracharjya.
 " The Ved having so far described God, by
 " various absolute,* and relative epithets,† was
 " convinced of its incapability of giving a real
 " description of the nature of the God-head;
 " language can convey a notion of things only
 " either by the appellations by which they are
 " already known, or by describing their figure,
 " accidents, genus and properties; but God
 " has none of these physical circumstances;
 " the Ved therefore attempted to explain him
 " in negative terms;" (that is by declaring
 " that whatever thing may be percieved by the

* As eternal, true and intelligent.

† As creator, preserver and destroyer.

" mental faculties, or the external senses, is not
 " God) " The Ved's ascribing to God attributes
 " of eternity, wisdom, truth, &c. shews that it
 " can explain him only by ascribing those attri-
 " butes and applying those epithets, that are held
 " by man in the highest estimation, without in-
 " tending to assert the adequacy of such descrip-
 " tion: He is the only true existence amidst all
 " dependent existences, and the true source of
 " our senses" Also, in the text 3rd of the Ce-
 " nopanishad. " Hence no vision can approach
 him; no language can describe him; no in-
 tellectual power can compass or determine him.
 We know nothing of how the supreme Being
 should be explained: He is beyond nature,
 which is above comprehension: Our ancient
 spiritual parents have thus explained him to
 us." It cannot however be inferred from our
 acknowledged ignorance of the nature and at-
 tributes of the supreme Being, that we are e-
 qually ignorant as to his existence. The won-
 derful structure and growth of even so trifling

an object as a leaf of a tree affords proof of an almighty Superintendant of the universe—and even the physical world affords numerous instances of things, whose existence is quite evident to our senses, but of whose nature we can form no conception; such as the causes of the sensations of heat and vision.

The learned Brahmin attempts to prove the impossibility of an adoration of the deity, saying (P, 33 L. 15) "That which cannot be conceived, cannot be worshipped;" should the learned Brahmin consider a full conception of the nature, essence, or qualities of the Supreme Being, or a physical picture truly representing the almighty power, with offerings of flowers, leaves and viands, as essential to adoration, I agree with the learned Brahmin with respect to the impossibility of the worship of God. But should adoration imply only the elevation of the mind to the conviction of the existence of the omnipresent deity, as

testified by his wise and wonderful works, and continual contemplation of his power as so displayed; together with a constant sense of the gratitude which we naturally owe him, for our existence, sensation, and comfort,—I never will hesitate to assert that his adoration is not only possible, and practicable, but even incumbent upon every rational creature. For further explanation, I refer the learned Brahmin to the text 47, sec. 4, chap. 3 of the Vedant.

To his question* “what are you yourselves?” I suppose I may safely reply for myself that I am a poor dependent creature;—subject, in common with others, to momentary changes and liable to sudden destruction.

At (P. 45 L. 30.) The learned Brahmin, if I rightly understand his object, means to insinuate that I have adopted the doctrines of those who deny the responsibility of man as a moral agent. I am quite at a loss to conceive from what part

of my writings this inference has been drawn; as I have not only never entertained such opinions myself, but have taken pains to explain the passage in the Ved on which this false doctrine is founded.—In page 17 of the preface to the Ishopanishad I have said that, “The Vedant by declaring that God is every where and every thing is in God, means that nothing is absent from God, and that nothing bears real existence except by the volition of God.” And again, in page 18, I quoted the example of the most revered teachers of the Vedant doctrine, who “although they declared their faith in the omnipresent God, according to the doctrines of the Vedant, assigned to every creature the particular character and respect he was entitled to.”

I omitted to notice the strange mode of argument which the learned Brahmun (at P. 29th) has adopted in defence of idolatry. After acknowledging that nothing but deficiency in judgement renders man incapable of

looking up to an omnipresent Supreme Being, whereby he mistakes a created object for the great Creator, he insinuates that an erroneous notion in this respect is as likely to lead to eternal happiness, as a knowledge of truth. At L. 5. he says, " And although a person through deficiency in judgement, should be unable to discover the real nature of a thing, does it follow that his error will prevent the natural effect from appearing? " When a man in a dream sees a tyger, is he not in as much alarm as if he saw it in reality? "

This mode of claiming for idol-worship a value equal to that of pure religion, which it can never be admitted to possess, may have succeeded in retaining some of his followers in the delusive dream, from which he is so anxious that they should not be awoke. But some of them have, I know, begun to enquire into the truth of those notions in which they have been instructed; and these are not likely to

mistake for true, the false analogy that is in the above passage attempted to be drawn, nor will they believe that, however powerful may be the influence of imagination, even under false impressions, future happiness, which depends on God alone, can ever be ranked amongst its effects. Such enquirers will, I hope, at last become sensible, that the system of *dreaming* recommended by the learned Brahmin, —however essential to the interests of himself, and of his cast,—can bring to them no advantage either substantial or eternal.

As instances of the erroneous confidence which is placed in the repetition of the name of a god to effect purification from sins, noticed by me in P. 21, I may quote the following passages.

He, who, pronounces “ Doorga,” (the name of the goddess) though he constantly practise adultery, plunder others of their property, or commit the most heinous crimes, is freed from all sins.*

* Vid. Doorga nám Mahatmya.

A person pronouncing loudly "reverence to "Huri," even involuntarily, in the state of falling down, of slipping, of labouring under illness, or of sneezing, purifies himself from the foulest crimes.*

He who contemplates the Ganges, while walking, sitting, sleeping, thinking of other things, awake, eating, breathing, and conversing, is delivered from sins.†

The circumstances alluded to in P. 21 of this treatise, relative to the wicked conduct of their supposed deities, are perfectly familiar to every individual Hindoo. But those Europeans who are not acquainted with the particulars related of them, may perhaps feel a wish to be in possession of them. I therefore with a view to gratify their curiosity and to vindicate my assertion, beg to be allowed to mention a few instances in point, with the authorities on which

* Vid. Bháguvut.

† Vid Mahabharuth.

they rest. As I have already noticed the debauchery of Krishna, and his gross sensuality, and that of his fellow deities, such as Siva and Bruhma, in the 21, 22 and 26th P. of my reply to the observations of Sunkarasastri, instead of repeating them here, I refer my readers to that reply, and also to the tenth division of the Bhaguvut, to the Hurybungsu or last division of the Mahabharuth, and to the Negums, as well as to the several Agums, which give a detailed account of their lewdness and debauchery. As to falsehood, their favourite deity Krishna is more conspicuous than the rest. Jurra-Sundh, a powerful prince of Behar, having heard of the melancholy murder of his son-in-law perpetrated by Krishna, harassed and at last drove him out of the place of his nativity (Muthoora) by frequent military expeditions: Krishna, in revenge, resolved to deprive that prince of his life by fraud, and in a most unjustifiable manner. To accomplish his object, he and his two cousins, Bheema

and Urjoona, declared themselves to be Brahmins; and in that disguise entered his palace; where finding him weakened by a religious fast, and surrounded only by his family and priests, they challenged him to fight a duel. He accordingly fought Bheema, the strongest of the three; who conquered and put him to death. *vid. Subha Purba or 2nd Book of the Maha-Bharuth.* Krishna again persuaded Joodhishthir his cousin, to give false evidence in order to accomplish the murder of Dron their spiritual father—*Vid. Dron Purba, or 7th Book of the Maha-Bharuth.*

Vishnu and others combined in a conspiracy against Bali, a mighty emperor; But finding his power irresistible, that deity was determined to ruin him by stratagem: and for that purpose appeared to him in the shape of a dwarf, begging alms. Notwithstanding Bali was warned of the intention of Vishnu, yet, impressed with a high sense of generosity, he could not refuse a boon to a beggar, that grateful deity in return, not

only deprived him of his whole empire, which he put himself in possession of by virtue of the boon of Buli, but also inflicted on him the disgrace of bondage, and confinement in Patal: *Vid latter part of the Hurri Bungs, or last book of the Maha Bharuth.*

When the battle of Coorookshetru was decided by the fatal destruction of Doorjodhun, the remaining part of the army of his rival Yooddhishthir, returned to the camp to rest during the night, under the personal care and protection of Mahadeva—That deity having, however been cajoled by the flattery offered him by Uswathama, one of the friends of the unfortunate Doorjodhun, not only allowed him to destroy the whole army that was asleep under the confidence of his protection, but even assisted him with his sword to accomplish his bloody purpose.

Vid. Sousuptik Purb; or 11th book of the Maha Bharuth.

When the Ussors at the churning of the

Ocean gave the pitcher of *the water of immortality* in charge to Vishnu, he betrayed his trust by delivering it to their step-brothers and enemies, the celestial Gods—Vid—1st book or *ádi Purb* of the Maha Bharth,

Instances like these might be multiplied beyond number: and crimes of a much deeper dye might easily be added to the list, were I not unwilling to stain these pages by making them the vehicle of such stories of immorality and vice. May God speedily purify the minds of my countrymen from the corruptness which such tales are too apt to produce; and lead their hearts to that pure morality which is inseparable from the true worship of Him!